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SUBJECT: OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOLDS BOARD ELECTIONS

¶1. (U) On May 16, Econoff spoke with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Director General Mohammed bin Nassir al-Shoraiqi regarding the organization's May 15 elections, in which 37 candidates vied for 15 open positions on the chamber's Board of Directors. Shoraiqi commented that the elections went smoothly, and that polling positions remained open until 8pm to accommodate the greatest possible turnout of the approximately 20,000 registered chamber voters (out of a total of 132,000 registered companies). He remarked that healthy numbers showed up to cast their ballots, a result of chamber efforts to promote the elections in the media and on its website.

¶2. (U) Media reports placed emphasis on the themes of "fairness" and "transparency" in describing the election process, and highlighted the oversight role of the chamber's election committee in ensuring that the will of the membership was respected in the voting process. To be eligible for election, candidates were required to have served in a business-related field for the past five years and be Omani citizens by birth. Government officials are not eligible to run. The elected members will join seven members who will be appointed via royal decree to fill out the 22-member body. Of the elected members, seven seats are allocated to Muscat, with one seat each allocated to the Batinah, Dhahira, Dakhiliya, Sharqiya, Wusta, Dhofar, Musandam, and Buraimi regions. Each member will serve a four-year term.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. The OCCI election represented a modest opportunity for part of the Omani public to elect directors to this quasi-government body through the ballot box. While the registered number of voters was modest, the organization was pleased that the election drew interest from the membership, that the emphasis was on fairness and transparency, and that the mechanics of the election went off without incident.

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